DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 111 052 95 EA 007 294

TITLE	Alternative Education. The Best of ERIC Series, Number 11.
INSTITUTION	Oregon Univ., Eugene. ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. of Education (DHEW), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Sep 75
CONTRACT	OEC-0-8-080353-3514
NOTE	5p.
AVAILABLE FROM	ERIC/CEM, University of Oregon, Eugene, Oregon 97403 (Free)
EDRS PRICE	MF-$0.76 HC-$1.58 Plus Postage
DESCRIPTORS	*Alternative Schools; *Annotated Bibliographies; *Educational Alternatives; *Literature Reviews

ABSTRACT

This pamphlet contains annotations of some of the literature included in the ERIC system on the topic of alternative education. Instructions are given for ordering the material cited. (MLF)

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Number 11 September 1975

The Best of ERIC presents annotations of ERIC literature on important topics in educational management.

The selections are intended to give the practicing educator easy access to the most significant and useful information available from ERIC. Because of space limitations, the items listed should be viewed as representative, rather than exhaustive, of literature meeting those criteria.

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This bibliography was prepared by the ERIC Clearinghouse on Educational Management for distribution by the Association of California School Administrators.

Alternative Education

Allen, Harvey A. "Alternative Routes to Adulthood: A Bibliography." ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 56, 9 (May 1975), pp. 632-635. EJ number not yet assigned.

Allen offers an up-to-date bibliography covering the major areas of concern in alternative education. His sources are divided into four sections: those dealing with the philosophical and sociological roots of alternative education; those dealing with reform within the public school system; those dealing with learning outside the classroom setting (including career education and community education); and those dealing with the free school movement separate from the public school system. Each entry is briefly annotated.

Barr, Robert D. ***The Growth of Alternative Public Schools: The 1975 ICOPE Report.*** Bloomington, Indiana: International Consortium for Options in Public Education, 1975. 17 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

This publication summarizes the findings of the latest informal poll conducted by the International Consortium for Options in Public Education. According to this survey, the number of alternative schools has grown dramatically from approximately 25 before 1969 to approximately 1,250 "alternative public schools now in operation." Barr estimates that by September 1975 the number may grow to 5,000. He points out that no educational innovation in the past has achieved such drastic expansion in such a short period of time.

Barr attributes this rise in the number of alternative schools to eight major factors. They include increased attention to education alternatives by education publications, as well as by general periodicals such as ***Time*** and ***Newsweek;*** the formulation of accreditation procedures; the endorsement of alternative schools by state departments of education and by federal and private funding organizations; and the development of teacher education programs geared to alternative school teaching.

Public opinion toward alternative schools has also changed in the past few years. No longer do proponents of alternative education receive much resistance from the community, according to Barr. Increasingly, citizens seem to regard education alternatives as valid uses for scarce tax dollars.

The picture painted by this survey is a rosy one for alternative schools. Although its statistics are not complete, as Barr acknowledges, they do point out a rather amazing growth trend.

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Barth, Roland S. "Is There a Way Out?" ***National Elementary Principal,*** 53, 3 (March/April 1974), pp. 12-18. EJ 096 020.

Barth notes the gradual dissolution of uniformity in the schools, pointing out that no longer can the principal rely on his teachers, students, or their parents to condone a "uniform position for everyone" in the school. The erosion of uniformity has led to an accompanying erosion of the power of the principal to administer the school. Barth recommends that the principal utilize "diversity" and "ecumenism" to reduce dissonance and to encourage learning.

Such diversity can be accomplished by offering education alternatives on two levels—within the district as a whole, and within a particular school. Barth prefers the latter approach, noting that when alternative schools are set up within the district, students, teachers, and parents with similar attitudes and values tend to congregate in individual schools, defeating the goal of teaching people "to understand and live with one another."

Providing alternative education within a school necessitates giving individual teachers autonomy within their classrooms, allowing them to choose the means by which they accomplish the educational goals set out by the school as a whole. It is essential to place students in the classroom environment most suited to aiding their development, according to Barth.

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Barth's article is of interest because he approaches the implementation of alternative education on a local level. As an elementary school principal, Barth indicates a thorough acquaintance with the problems of resolving conflicting expectations and still maintaining educational quality.

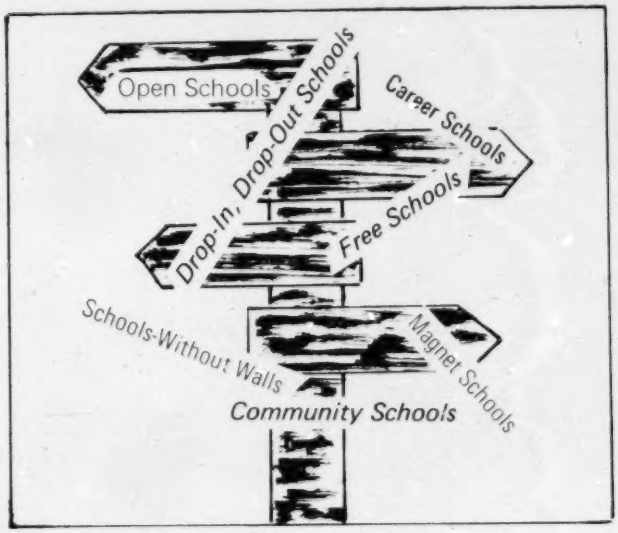
Broudy, Harry S. "Educational Alternatives—Why Not? Why NOT." ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 54, 7 (March 1973), pp. 438-440. EJ 073 824.

Broudy analyzes four arguments commonly employed by advocates of education alternatives—that such alternatives promote freedom, that they encourage better choice, that they "provide for differences," and that they promote creativity.

Alternative schools are good, according to Broudy, if they increase the freedom of the student to achieve three kinds of "adequacy": occupational adequacy, civic adequacy, and personal adequacy. In other words, if alternative schools make it possible for students to adapt to society, then they are successful. However, "if they simply free the pupil" from the task of achieving social adaptation, then "they are not good."

Broudy contends that frequently alternative school advocates fail to acknowledge the basis on which wise decision-making is founded. He states that "many of the pressures for alternatives can be construed as a flight from responsibility."

The accommodation of differences and the encouragement of individual creativity supposedly accomplished by education alternatives can be accomplished just as well within the traditional public school, according to Broudy. He notes that "alternatives as such do not of themselves guarantee the satisfaction of the demands of individuality."



Although his prose is rather dense, Broudy's article is valuable because it examines some of the premises taken for granted by education alternative advocates. He succeeds in making the reader realize that concepts such as freedom and creativity are somewhat difficult to define, and that one should be aware of their fluidity.

Cass, James. "Are There Really Any Alternatives?" ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 54, 7 (March 1973), pp. 452-453. EJ 073 828.

"It is so easy for us to accept the forms of innovation while losing the substance," according to Cass. Pointing out that "the prolonged exposure to an intensive, change-inducing environment" is the way to produce change in human attitudes and behavior, he notes that often educators adopt the rhetoric of innovations without actually putting those innovations into practice. Such is frequently the case with alternative education.

Part of the difficulty lies in the fact that alternative schools have the same fundamental goals that traditional schools do—"to achieve the ancient objectives of the schools," as Cass states. Therefore, alternatives are merely different means to the same end.

In developing education alternatives, educators should consider two central issues: "who is capable of learning what in school," and what kind of learning should the schools emphasize. Cass suggests that schools can broaden their definition of intelligence to include factors other than the capacity for abstract reasoning and problem-solving. He suggests that a redefinition of the "ancient objectives" of education is in order if alternative schools are to become true alternatives.

Deal, Terrence E. ***An Organizational Explanation of the Failure of Alternative Schools. Research and Development Memorandum No. 133.*** Stanford, California: Stanford Center for Research and Development in Teaching, Stanford University, 1975. 27 pages. ED 101 441.

Deal maintains that the failure of some alternative schools is attributable to intraorganizational difficulties—that "they were not able to cope with the organizational problems produced by new authority patterns and by highly complex educational processes." Deal's thesis departs from the more common economic, political, and anthropological explanations of alternative school failure. He speculates that problems arising from these three factors may follow from the basic organizational weakness of the schools, instead of serving as sources for that weakness.

Deal's organizational analysis uncovered "a fairly predictable series of events or stages" leading to one of three "outcomes": dissolution of the school, assumption of the characteristics of traditional schools, or development of a "stabilized alternative to conventional schooling." His two case studies (of a community school and an urban school) indicate three main evolutionary phases through which alternative schools pass.

First, "the euphoric stage" is marked by excitement, enthusiasm, and cooperation among students, staff, and parents. Second, the psychic upheaval stage occurs, characterized by depression and crises. After upheaval, dissatisfaction sets in. Everyone involved comes to believe that the alternative school "is no better than anything else." The dissatisfaction is resolved in one of the three outcomes listed above.

This anatomy of organizational problems is well written and an intelligent, constructive approach to a topic that alternative education proponents sometimes don't like to confront—the failure of alternative schools.

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Dunn, Rita, and **Dunn, Kenneth.** "Learning Style as a Criterion for Placement in Alternative Programs." ***Phi Delta Kappan,*** 56, 4 (December 1974), pp. 275-278. EJ 107 321.

Assignment of students to alternative education programs should not be done on "a wholesale, random, voluntary, or parent-determined basis," according to these authors. Unless the learning situation fits the individual student's learning style,

little will be accomplished by switching school environments.

The Dunns outline four "sets of stimuli" that affect the individual's style of learning. Different students react differently to these sets of stimuli. First, environmental factors such as lighting, temperature, noise, and building design elicit different responses. Second, the emotional makeup of the child determines which learning situation will be optimal. Third, sociological factors, such as how the student reacts to his peers and to authority figures, affect learning style. And finally, the student's particular physical makeup affects how he learns. For example, some students are more receptive to visual stimuli, whereas others respond better to aural or tactile stimuli.

The authors outline the necessary learning style characteristics for several kinds of instructional programs (the open classroom, the individualized classroom, and the traditional classroom).

Although their prose is somewhat jargon-ridden, their basic argument is well made. Freedom of choice is important, but cannot be allowed to become the decisive factor in selecting an education alternative.

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Address requests to EDRS, Computer Microfilm International Corporation, P.O. Box 190, Arlington, Virginia 22210.

Fantini, Mario D. "Education By Choice." *NASSP Bulletin*, 57, 374 (September 1973), pp. 10-19. EJ 083 861.

Pointing out that "alternative public education means diversifying the means to common ends," Fantini outlines six "ground rules that legitimize alternatives." First, the alternatives must be based on a common set of objectives. Second, alternative schools must not be exclusive, since "no educational option can be considered legitimate if it practices exclusivity in any form."

Third, all alternatives must be created and treated equally in order to avoid bad feeling among participants. Fourth, teachers, parents, and students must be allowed freedom of choice in selecting an alternative. Fifth, each alternative program must be carefully evaluated. And finally, "alternative education should not depend on increases in per student expenditure." It should hold its own, financially.

Fantini includes a brief description of the Quincy, Illinois, Education by Choice plan that offers five education alternatives within the same public high school. Fantini, who is one of the foremost proponents of alternative schools, paints a very appealing picture of education by choice through alternative programs.

Hatch, James; Ladd, Margaret; and Ruderman, Sydelle. *Alternative Education. Optional Learning Environments. A Catalog of Schools and Programs.* Trenton: Division of Research, Planning, and Evaluation, New Jersey State Department of Education, 1974. 81 pages. ED 098 666.

Although this catalog includes alternative schools in only five states and Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands, its entries offer an interesting glimpse of alternative programs in some of the nation's most crowded urban areas (New York City, Newark, and Pittsburgh, for example). Its compilers acknowledge that the list is incomplete, but, for those schools included, a brief description of their programs and students provides the reader with more substantive information than the usual listing of names and addresses.

The catalog indicates the broad scope of alternative education responses to a variety of problems, such as drug abuse, dropping out, and general urban alienation. Most of the programs emphasize development of self-esteem and confidence, characteristics sorely lacking in many students of traditional public schools.

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Janssen, K. C. Cole. *Matters of Choice. A Ford Foundation Report on Alternative Schools.* New York: Ford Foundation, 1974. 31 pages. ED 096 744.

This report provides a general outline of the origins and implementation of education alternatives, focusing (naturally) on those alternative school programs partially funded through the Ford Foundation (including Philadelphia's Parkway Program). The report notes the trend away from large-scale alternative programs initiated and administered from the top. Successful educational change originates and is carried out on a more local level.

Although the number of students served by smaller alternative programs is not great, the achievement of those students (as measured by standardized test scores) is at least as high as that of students educated in a traditional environment, and "usually better," according to Janssen.

Perhaps the major conclusion to be drawn from this document is the necessity of long-term, public financing for alternative schools. Funds from private sources and even one-shot federal funding cannot guarantee in the long run the financial stability of alternative programs, though such funds can help to initiate these programs.

The necessity of utilizing public funds means that most alternative schools eventually will have to work in cooperation with the public school system. But such cooperation does not necessarily entail diluting the educational impact of the alternative, according to this report.

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National Association of Secondary School Principals. *More Options: Alternatives to Conventional School. Curriculum Report, Vol. 2, No. 3.* Washington, D.C.: 1973. 13 pages. ED 099 995.

The authors acknowledge that the term ***alternative schools*** is a broad one, including such diverse educational programs as free schools, survival schools, and career schools. But these different alternatives have certain characteristics in common. For example, they all make greater use of community

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resources than conventional schools do; they tend to be more flexible; they tend to be more responsive to certain community needs; and they are "most often comparatively small schools."

This report outlines important areas involved in the implementation of an alternative education program, such as financing and defining the relationship between the conventional school and the alternative. The alternative school can offer more flexibility in curriculum, staffing, and facility use.

The need for leadership and "rules and procedures for governance" is fairly well established, according to this report. Even though more people can be integrated into the decision-making processes, the experience of early alternative schools shows that total freedom can lead to chaos.

Although this report is brief, it covers most of the bases. It is a valuable overview of alternative schools.

Order copies from National Association of Secondary School Principals, 1904 Association Drive, Reston, Virginia 22091. $0.50. Quantity discounts, payment must accompany orders.
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Natriello, Gary, and Venables, Thomas J., eds. ***Alternative Education. Books and Films about Alternative Education. An Annotated Bibliography.*** Trenton: Division of Research, Planning, and Evaluation, New Jersey State Department of Education, 1974. 23 pages. ED 098 665.

The compilers of this bibliography divide their sources into five categories. The first deals with the "***whys*** of alternative education"—the critical analysis of the educational process. The second category covers "the theoretical considerations of a progressive reform of the school in terms of alternatives in education." The third deals with individual schools and programs, while the fourth includes materials on how to initiate and implement alternative education. The final section lists directories, catalogs, and periodicals devoted to education alternatives.

This bibliography includes not only written materials, but films (both documentary and fictional). Although far from comprehensive, it does offer some different (and interesting) source material not usually included in the literature on education alternatives.

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Smith, Vernon H. "Optional Alternative Public Schools." Speech presented at National School Boards Association annual convention, Miami Beach, April 1975. 7 pages. ED number not yet assigned.

The development of optional alternative public schools is "a strategy for self-renewal," according to Smith. It is "a simple and effective way to provide a total educational program that is more responsive to the needs of more families within any community."

Smith advocates the careful consideration of options by ***all*** public school systems, regardless of composition and size. He points out the advantage in allowing people to choose the kind of school they prefer, rather than compelling them to accept one particular kind (usually the conventional).

Freedom of choice seems to have a salutary effect on both the public and the school staff as well, even though the conventional school is frequently "the most popular option." Freedom of choice also means that "an additional level of accountability" is added. As Smith notes, "When alternatives are available by choice, you have a consumer market in education." In other words, school personnel are no longer guaranteed a captive audience; they must earn the public's attention (and attendance).

Smith's argument that optional alternative public schools would help to restore the public's confidence in the education system is a convincing one. He points out that providing options within a district need not cost any more than providing conventional education.

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